



Indiana State Department of Agriculture
Governor Michael R. Pence
Lt. Governor Sue Ellspermann, Secretary of Agriculture and Rural Development
Gina Sheets, Indiana Agriculture Director

By Robert Ziegler, ISDA Director of Communications

Mike Seidl will go to the other side of the world and back on behalf of the Indiana hardwoods industry.

The program manager for Indiana State Department of Agriculture proved as much recently (again) when he attended the 8th annual Dubai Wood & Wood Machinery Show in the United Arab Emirates. Seidl spent three days at the event meeting potential buyers of Indiana product from countries through the Middle East, North Africa and South Asia.

The show attracted more than 7,000 visitors from more than 30 countries, with a host of qualified contacts made on behalf of Indiana businesses.

It's the way business in this industry gets done and reflects the commitment ISDA has to supporting hardwoods, a healthy and prosperous sector of the agricultural economy in this state. While people may not think of wood immediately when listing Indiana agricultural products, the state actually ranks first nationally in the production of wood office furniture and in the top five in several related categories. This accounts for at least \$16.6 billion of annual economic impact to the state and more than 85,000 jobs related to the industry.

ISDA Director Gina Sheets said when people think of agricultural exports from Indiana, this should always include hardwoods.

"The statistics consistently tell the great success story that is Indiana hardwoods," Sheets said. "Our department remains committed to helping create and expand economic opportunities for the many businesses associated with this industry, and the opportunity for both job and revenue creation show how well this policy fits with the Pence-Ellspermann Administration's priorities."

The product being marketed at the Dubai Show comes mainly from Indiana's forests. Seidl says the abundant availability of resources here makes the product coming from the state attractive to potential buyers looking to manufacture furniture and other products.

"Indiana has some of the finest, high-quality hardwoods in the world," Seidl explained. "This includes two exceptional species in walnut and white oak. Indiana has had 26 veneer mills in the state, which signifies that the timber is of the highest quality."

In Dubai, Seidl supported a USA Pavilion display, which was operated in conjunction with the American Hardwood Export Council. Indiana was one of just two states on hand at the event (along with many private companies), and the event definitely proved to be a rich opportunity.

"We had a good response there," Seidl said of the trade show. "The Dubai show is a great networking opportunity where we can visit with importers from a lot of countries in the Middle East. It is the largest trade show in the Middle East and we had a great response. We met with numerous mill work and



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kitchen cabinet manufacturers who now want to buy direct from the source vs. buying from a large importer. Their contract business has increased enough that they now can afford to buy full containers. That shows you the business climate has really picked up in the last 14-16 months.”

Seidl added that the industry itself puts a premium on face-to-face contact, with a fast-paced deal-seeking atmosphere present on a week-to-week basis.

“I see the hardwood sector moving into a much more global economy all the time,” he said. “We have a great base of hardwood manufacturers and timber in Indiana. Most countries in the Middle East don’t have hardwood forests. This gives companies in the U.S. additional opportunities to sell, even if business is a bit slower here domestically. Being at these shows is a great opportunity for those companies, which employ Hoosiers, to be more viable overseas. A lot of Indiana hardwood companies are doing 15-20 percent of their business globally, and some even more than that. The middle class is growing in many of those countries and that middle class wants a nicer home, a nice apartment, items like hardwood flooring and quality furniture. Those markets will continue to grow as the middle class there continues to expand.”

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